noaa aquaculture program

U. S. Aquaculture

The National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007

With interest in the *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* growing, it is important for the public to have accurate information to understand marine aquaculture and its impacts on aquatic ecosystems. Following are some key facts to help correct some misconceptions about aquaculture and the *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007*.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to the stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management, and the promotion of healthy ecosystems. As the lead federal agency for marine aquaculture policy, NOAA is seeking authority under the *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* to create a regulatory framework for safe and sustainable aquaculture operations in U.S. federal waters.

Aquaculture operations in U.S. coastal waters are subject to environmental regulations under state and federal laws. The Act would establish requirements to ensure offshore aquaculture development proceeds in an environmentally responsible manner that protects wild stocks and marine ecosystems. Moreover, it would establish a coordinated permitting process for offshore aquaculture that integrates requirements under existing state and federal environmental laws and fills in regulatory gaps.

Over the last decade, there has been significant innovation in aquaculture technology, which has led to improvements in equipment and environmental safeguards. The *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* would require adoption of rigorous environmental standards for offshore aquaculture in the United States, allowing companies to take advantage of technological innovations and providing leadership by setting good examples of properly sited and sustainably managed aquaculture facilities.

Notably, the environmental requirements listed in *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* reflect the recommendations of groups as diverse as the American Fisheries Society, the Woods Hole Marine Aquaculture Task Force, the State of Florida, and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

Net Cage, Kona Blue

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Environmental Requirements


Cobia in Aquapond, Snapperfarm, Inc.

Drugs, Chemicals & Farm-Raised Fish

Recent scientific studies have affirmed that the health benefits of eating seafood far outweigh the risks of trace level contaminant exposure. NOAA supports efforts to ensure the public has a healthy, secure seafood supply through the development of safe marine aquaculture operations in the United States. The U.S. marine aquaculture industry helps maintain a supply of healthy seafood through well-developed aquatic animal health management practices. These include the use of vaccines that have been developed to protect fish from disease, largely eliminating the use of antibiotics.

Existing federal authorities provide health and safety protection for seafood that is raised and consumed in the United States. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sets requirements for seafood safety, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates pesticide use and discharges from aquaculture facilities. Aquaculture development under the *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* would be consistent with FDA and EPA standards and regulations.

Feed Use in Aquaculture

Fishmeal and fish oil are important components of farm-raised fish diets. The relatively high cost of fishmeal and fish oil – some fish farms spend up to 60% of their costs on feed – is fueling research and the development of alternative feed formulations and plant-based diets for marine aquaculture. On a global scale, significant improvements have been made in reducing the reliance on fishmeal and fish oil for feeds in aquaculture, and NOAA and other federal agencies play a vital role in that research. To help maintain the greatest human health benefits of eating farm-raised seafood, it is unlikely that fish meal and fish oil will disappear from feed altogether. NOAA and other Federal agencies are working with industry and others on research to find suitable alternatives for fish meal and fish oil, and the Administration's offshore aquaculture legislation will require continuing research on this issue.

Under new authority provided in the reauthorized *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*, NOAA is working with the Regional Fishery Management Councils to end and prevent overfishing through the establishment of annual catch limits and accountability measures. This will help the United States achieve sustainably managed fish stocks. Yet, even with production of wild caught fisheries at fully sustainable levels, increased aquaculture production from domestic and foreign sources will be required to increase the seafood supply to meet U.S. demand. The *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* would establish the legal framework regarding permits, enforcement, and monitoring of aquaculture in U.S. federal waters and help ensure that human health, the marine environment, and wild stocks are protected.